

# CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUNDAMENTALS OF A POLICY OF POPULATION.\*

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What is needed for the right conception of a policy of the population problem is a bird's eye view of all the various issues which bear on the study of population. The economist looks at nothing but the question of hands, and at most the relationship between labour and the means of subsistence. The military expert sees nothing but the possible number of recruits. The demographer is preoccupied with the number of births, deaths and marriages and their relationship according to the city, the country and the period; or the sub-division of individuals according to professions and localities, or as poor, as criminals, as suicides, and under the various categories of the cultured or the illiterate. The anthropologist studies the divisions into races within a population, and the differences of their respective adaptabilities, the internal effect of social selection and the external effect of colonisation. And each one proposes practical measures according to the objective of his inquiries. From these narrow conceptions, not always inspired by a truly scientific spirit, arise formidable errors on practical issues. In the matter of population, however, nearly every question, and particularly questions of a practical order, are conditioned by biological laws. If population policy for an instant loses sight of genetics, its conclusions must necessarily be false and the effect of the application of these conclusions irreparable, for the laws of heredity are inexorable. One cannot act on them except through these same laws.

The law of Malthus has up to now hardly come into play, for there was a superfluity of empty spaces on the globe and the manufactures of over-populated countries made it possible to buy the means of subsistence in countries rich in agriculture and poor in industry. Now these empty spaces are becoming rare even in America, and the time is near when there will be more men than bread in Europe. To-morrow every country will need all its own food supply. In the near future emigration, which is already difficult, will be nothing but a memory. Every nation will reserve all its potential resources for its own nationals. Tell me, I beg, for you must have thought of this, what will happen in Germany for example, on the day when for lack of food for all, two or

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three tens of millions of inhabitants will be faced with death? Or in England, or in Italy, countries which have long since overstepped the margin of their self-sufficiency? From this moment we must take the necessary measures, so that in every country the population will in time be reduced to that which its own agriculture can support. There is no population question of greater urgency.

The re-establishment of the equilibrium in over-populated countries is the only practicable means for preventing crises of famine and war such as have been re-enacted on this earth since the time of barbarian invasions. After the conquest of the ocean, escape from over-population was colonisation over-seas, and this was efficacious. Colonisation called into being the new world and made civilisation world wide. It brought an increase of riches to Europe. The verdict of history, however, on the permanent benefit of this course, is not yet definitive, and in regard to these occurrences the final balance has not yet been struck. There are still some accounts to pay. Apart from injustice and cruelty, economic greed has caused nations to make terrible mistakes, and Statesmen in realising these aims may have sacrificed by their policy for an immediate gain the future of their nations. Spain has hardly recovered from the consequences of her colonisation policy. England has expended much through generations in order to furnish America with ready-made workmen and has impoverished herself of valuable stocks only with the obvious result of creating a rival more powerful than herself. America in its turn, in order to secure labour as quickly as possible has made the mistake of introducing elements of every colour, and of highly incompatible mentality, in the mad hope of assimilating all and bringing them by education to an American type of intelligence, which has not happened. To-day she regrets her mistake. Now this avenue of emigration is practically closed. Territories habitable by Europeans, that is to say with temperate climate, which like Australia are empty, or nearly so, like North and South America, are now occupied by nations firmly organised, and which understand the necessity of reserving to their descendants land which is yet free. That colonisation which formerly exterminated the vanquished, is no longer possible, and it would be a shattering thought that the great civilised races of Europe might possibly fall a prey to the lot of the aboriginal Australians, or the Red Skins. We should, however, be wrong not to envisage it. This danger does not only exist for Europe. The colossal mistake of equipping with the power which has been forged from Western material culture the millards of men inhabiting India and the far East, is beginning to weigh heavily on England and also on France and those nations who were imprudent enough to follow their lead. A mad racial vanity has made them forget that if coloured people appeared to have less adaptability or power to furnish leaders and men of genius with first-rate mentality, they could nevertheless supply a sufficient number (and this is equally true also of Africa) for a supply of officers, administrators, leaders, agriculturalists, bankers, bishops and professors, and every grade which contributes to form the economic and military ranks of a nation:—politicians as able as their own, ambitious to equal them and moreover firmly determined not to bear their rule. Thus colonial expansion has resulted in giving the nations who had no hostile feeling

against the white races, a hatred of Europeans and the power to eliminate them by sheer force of numbers. This mistake has cost us dear and may in the long run be of far greater importance than political economy to the generations which come after. And like Europe, Asia is over-populated and is on the eve of a crisis in food supply. It would be imprudent to think, now that distance is always lessening, that Europe arouses no envy or that she is immune from danger. It becomes clear that the number of men on earth (whites as well as yellow) has very nearly arrived at the possible maximum, that the density is badly distributed and that the redistribution of space can only be rectified by displacements, and finally that limitation of births in over-populated countries is the only means whereby the balance may be peaceably restored. But in population, number is not the only thing to consider. Men are no mere statistical units. Their personal value is of infinitely greater importance for the State. In the population as a whole some live as parasites, discontented and often dangerous to civilisation, in idleness or rapine, and civilisation alone curbs their instincts. The mass in docile fashion shares up this burden without understanding it too clearly, and a small number alone carry on the work of progress. All future progress depends on this little *élite*. It must never be forgotten that on the development of the number and the quality of this little *élite* civilisation itself actually depends, that if it should come to an end at the point at which we have now arrived, progress itself would stop; and if this small group disappeared, the masses whom they lead, being no longer supported and directed, the fall would follow quickly, under the overwhelming pressure the mass of that uncivilisable residuum.

If we are to judge by actions, it seems as if no-one really envisages clearly the gravity of the present situation. The problems to be solved by Statesmen and leaders of industry, and commerce, and of banking, grow to a complexity which passes the limits of our present intellectual capacity. To-morrow you will scarcely find a man who is up to the greatness of the new tasks, and I venture to say that the very best of our own time have not discharged themselves any too well of the difficulties they have encountered.

The mass of knowledge which is now required exceeds our capacity for understanding. The time is no longer when everything was explained by the immobile and indivisible atom, by the cell and karyokinesis, transformism, gravity and Euclidian geometry. Science now is bordering on the infinite and the most powerful brain feels feeble in front of the tasks which are glimpsed. Vaster memories must be forged, sharper insight must be gained; now is the moment when man has to choose whether he will become a demi-god or fall back into barbarism. And this is no figure of rhetoric but simply expresses the possibilities of the day after to-morrow. The science of population, if it remains true to its real function, must not be regarded merely from the point of view of to-day, but that of the future. Till to-day, we have counted too much on chance for the production of superior men, and indeed it was quite impossible to use consciously the tremendous forces of heredity before its laws were discovered. At best man relied somewhat vaguely on the transmission of the effects of education. But education has no effect except to utilise as

perfectly as possible the present generation. Instruction is not inherited; not even language in its most ancient form is transmitted by inheritance. A child does not speak until it has been taught, and does not speak the language of its parents, but that of those who have taught it any other. Nor does it prefer its own if this also has been taught it.

Society owes to each individual the maximum of culture which it can give, and each individual owes to Society the maximum of service which his faculties permit. But no education allows an individual to give more than the patrimony of his natural inheritance, and only a double-edged selection, negative and positive, will eliminate undesirable individuals and produce a greater number of superior beings, and create stocks possessing faculties which are now particularly rare. It is amongst these that variation or rather mutation may, in the long run and very rarely, give individuals and stocks from which we may obtain a humanity as superior to the man of to-day as the mass is to the remote ancestor of men and apes.

It is quite vain to count on individual variations or mutations in an unselected group for the production, without undue delay, of the necessary types of men. I wish to emphasise this point because even those who are well acquainted with biology often tend to forget how the way was forged from the ancestral primate to primitive man and not to give due weight to the *role* of the time factor.

As a rule evolution does not arise suddenly or through one pair, but starting from the complex of distinct and neighbouring species, proceeds by a series of mutations concerned with a particular group of characters, and these not always the same or in the same order, each line of descent showing its own particular advance in the common direction. And the advance was not in the mass, but on the contrary in little bunches. Phylogenetic evolution cannot be compared to a mould, transforming without exception all the larvae of one species into a butterfly of the same species. Mutation is a phenomenon of exceptions and of the order of probability of a millionth and a billionth, and even then gives no practical result unless a male and female vary in the same direction at the same time and both meet and reproduce. And as man instead of furnishing one generation a year or every three or four years, only achieves three in a century, thirty in a thousand years, it is easy to judge what time we should have to wait for the chance arrival of the super-man. Duration in evolutionary concerns is of the geological order, and even if we substitute the wisest possible selection for chance, it will only be in centuries that we may await the first of the results promised by the Serpent, "Ye shall be as Gods."

In the brain of man the universe moves slowly to self-consciousness. Possibly the reason for man's existence (the *raison d'être* of human life) is the development of this self-consciousness, fragmentary and often betrayed by senses which perceive partially and as best they may the manifestations of nature; controlled and increased by instruments continuously more numerous and more powerful and more subtle, a body of knowledge is created by man, synthetised by science, conditioned by the elements of possibility, but still self-consciousness.

Population legislation, taking genetics as its basis, can and must from the present moment begin this essential task. It may so work

as to deliver society from a part of its burdens and from the dangerous elements which now exist, by eliminating cacogenic stocks.

This legislation may facilitate the multiplication of Eugenic stocks and it is competent of giving immediate results and increasing results, so as to forward the adaptation of populations to the needs of civilisation in the future. These needs will not long be the same as those of to-day, and will generation by generation progressively differ from these.

Philanthropy is a beautiful thing but must be exercised with judgment. As now practised it frequently works clean against its own end and perpetuates suffering at high cost. It is right to alleviate the ills of the incurable, of the insane and of the degenerate, unfit for work. It is even right to pity criminals, prostitutes and professional beggars, but it is not right to go so far as to augment the number of these by permitting them by their personal liberty to poison with their descendancy the future community. Laws which prevent undesirable categories from transmitting their taints must be perfected in those countries which have them and adopted in those which are not yet so supplied. These measures of negative selection are of the greatest immediate urgency.

The protection of Eugenic stocks and those which nearly approach them, must be undertaken. It must be done in a great variety of ways which may put a check on the effects of the social selection which exists to-day. More than forty years ago I showed that all forms of social selection tends downwards. It is through this action that nations are beheaded, degenerate and perish. And above all we must carefully avoid that measures like that of the system of *Marsalism* in France cause a paralysis of reproduction of human intellect.

And lastly it is necessary that in the whole nation, and this is a most difficult point, reproduction must be directed with a sense of adaptation towards future conditions of existence by raising the mean level of brain power. The importance of numbers and of muscular force in the state belongs rather to the past than to the future. The type of mind which corresponds to that of the working class and particularly to the manual worker has reached the limit of its usefulness. In the near future, counting by the clock of history, the progress of chemistry physics, biology, the possession of unlimited sources of heat and force at a minimum of expenditure (inexhaustible for the duration of actual cosmic conditions), will greatly reduce the need of manual labour. For the full utilisation of the machines of the future, for the perfection of delicate processes, we shall on the contrary need brains highly resistant to work and capable of a degree of instruction which surpasses that of the mean of the labouring class of to-day. The *élite* of the working class and of our middle class of to-day could furnish this human material. For the higher functions of social life we shall need brains of a type at least equal to that of the most powerful which exist to-day. Multiplication of eugenic elements will produce these little by little. From this moment onwards it is worse than useless to encourage reproduction of stocks of inferior capacity or of mediocre groups. Their descendants would only be a burden to the society of the future, as the retarded are to our own.

When we take the point of view of the future, reproduction

policy must have nothing but the aim of the constant increase in the value of individuals. The value of an individual is calculated as a function of his social usefulness, both while he lives but above all after his death. Humanity to its last hour will always be in the debt of the unknown inventors of fire and of writing. How many inventions have served vast multitudes during centuries, and inversely what human masses have produced barely the equivalent of that which they have consumed, and how many drones have consumed without producing? The transition to the state of society only commenced when man found himself reaching out from his individual interest to collective ends. It developed when it became possible to constrain the mass to ordered life. But it is not yet complete, and society will only be truly created in that day when each individual will live only for the whole, a degree which has been reached by the more ancient, if less well endowed biological societies as those of the ants, the termites and the bees. The crystalization of instincts will never doubtless be as complete amongst men, and that is probably to be desired, as a much higher grade of perfection would be thereby excluded, but each step made in this direction separates man more widely from the ancestral primates who lived each for himself.

Man will not have escaped wholly from the animal level till that moment when the selfish instinct will have been destroyed by a long course of selectionist population policy.